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Professor G. Ross Roy, 1924-2013

Ross Roy, distinguished Burns scholar, editor, and collector, died peacefully on February 19 2013 at his home. Ross was a pioneer in Scottish literary studies and did much to define the field throughout the later part of the twentieth century. With his passing, Scottish Literature has lost one of its most ardent supporters and celebrated personalities.

Ross was born in Montreal 20 August 1924. After seeing service during World War II in the Royal Canadian Air Force, he completed his education at Concordia University, from which he graduated BA, before studying for his Master of Arts at Montreal. He also gained the *maîtrise* from the University of Strasbourg and doctorates from Montreal and the Sorbonne. Following graduation, Ross occupied teaching positions as varied as the Royal Military College of Canada, the University of Alabama, the University of Montreal, and in Lubbock Texas at the Technical University, before moving to the University of South Carolina. He was also visiting professor at the University of Metz.

In 1965, Ross was appointed Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina, the institution in which he would spend the major part of his professional life. Ross spent twenty-five years teaching comparative literature at USC before retiring Emeritus professor in 1990. Prior to his retirement, he donated his extensive private collection of Burnsiana and Scottish Literature – the world's largest - to the University of South Carolina, where it now resides as the G. Ross Roy collection. As a resource for Burns scholars in particular, the collection justifies its fame, boasting the majority of published studies of Burns as well as such rarities as a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) and the only complete edition of the extremely rare *Merry Muses of Caledonia* (1799). To encourage use of the collection, Ross and wife Lucie also founded the W. Ormiston Roy fellowship, named after the grandfather who first introduced the young Ross to the work of Burns, and whose own library, inherited in 1959, became the foundation upon which the USC collection was built.

In 1963 Ross Roy founded *Studies in Scottish Literature*, a landmark publication in the development of Scottish Studies and the first peer-reviewed journal dedicated to Scottish Literature. Ably assisted by his wife Lucie, Ross accomplished the Herculean task of editing the first thirty-six

volumes, in which he published work by many of the biggest names in Scottish Studies past and present. The volumes, which are now available free online, are a veritable Who's Who of Scottish literary studies, and their availability in digital form makes all Ross's hard work readily accessible for the benefit of future scholars.

With regards to his own scholarship, Ross was a pre-eminent and esteemed scholar of Burns. His contribution to the field of Burns studies includes such works as his revised edition of *The Letters of Robert Burns* (1985), which extended an earlier edition of the poet's letters by J. DeLancey Ferguson, alongside numerous articles and other pieces on Burns. His work has been justly celebrated by his many contacts in the field of Burns scholarship - many of whom were also close personal friends of a man known for his great sociability - and his achievements have been recognised by Burns clubs and societies throughout the world. Honorary doctorates were awarded by the University of Edinburgh in 2002 and Glasgow in 2009, where he also became honorary Professor of Scottish Literature. A recent festschrift, *Robert Burns and Friends* (2012), edited by Patrick Scott and Kenneth Simpson, was published by the University of South Carolina in celebration of Professor Roy's life. Appropriately, the volume collects essays written by past recipients of the W. Ormiston Roy fellowship.

Few scholars have promoted Scottish Literature with the energy and enthusiasm Ross Roy displayed throughout his life. He was an early champion for the field and did much to help gain recognition for Scottish Literature as a distinct and, just as crucially, credible area of literary study. By founding key conduits such as *Studies in Scottish Literature* and the Roy fellowship, Ross was a great facilitator of wider research in the field; their continuation today should help ensure that influence continues after his death. In 2009 In 2009, overseen by the Universities Committee for the Teaching of Scottish Literature and contributed to by the Scottish Arts Council, an annual award in his name, the Ross Roy Medal, was established to recognise the best student work in Scottish Literature - a particularly fitting legacy for such a renowned mentor.

Ronnie Young

University of Glasgow